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# Letter dated 16 April 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Peru and Sweden, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, hereby transmit a summary note of the meeting of the Informal Expert Group held on 28 February 2018 on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gustavo **Meza-Cuadra**
Ambassador

(*Signed*) Olof **Skoog**
Ambassador

(*Signed*) Karen **Pierce**
Ambassador

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## Annex to the letter dated 16 April 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

## Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security: summary of the meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo held 28 February 2018

On 28 February 2018, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ahead of the expiration of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) at the end of March 2018. Members of the Security Council were briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO, Leila Zerrougui, approximately two weeks after her arrival at her new post. Members of the Mission and the United Nations country team joined the meeting from Kinshasa and Goma by way of videoconference.

Member States asked questions about the Mission's engagement with the African Union on gender issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; fundraising efforts to date for the implementation of the country's national action plan on women, peace and security and the joint communiqué on conflict-related sexual violence; reasons behind the slight drop in voter registration rates among women and the rising violence against women and girls, including the abduction of girls; progress in gender mainstreaming throughout all areas of the work of the peacekeeping Mission, including with regard to the Stabilization Unit, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, community violence reduction and the Mission's engagement with armed groups; the role of women's civil society and human rights defenders and their relationship with the United Nations; and strategies and special measures to ensure women's political participation in the upcoming elections, both as voters and as candidates. Finally, Member States asked if there were other ways the Security Council could help advance the women and peace and security agenda beyond ensuring the inclusion of forceful language on that topic in the next resolution on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the mandate of MONUSCO.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General noted that, during her first two weeks in the country, in addition to meeting the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and key ministers and ambassadors, she met with women's groups and women leaders, including young women, of both the government and the opposition, and had heard their views on the main issues affecting the country at this crucial juncture. Her answers to questions by experts of the Security Council include the main points of her intervention, and are set out below.

- The Security Council should maintain and strengthen the gender-related provisions in the peacekeeping mandate and in the upcoming resolution on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The provisions should include support for the civil and political rights of women activists and human rights defenders, women's organizations and civil society networks, ensure dedicated gender expertise in the Mission and ensure the implementation of the national action plan on women, peace and security and the joint communiqué signed in 2013 on conflict-related sexual violence and the specific action plans adopted by the armed forces and the national police. The Special Representative emphasized the importance of creating meaningful spaces for women's civil society

organizations to ensure that the voices and agency of women inform the Mission's priorities on women, peace and security.

- Significant advances have been made with regard to accountability for sexual violence in the last few years, and further investments are needed for reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, particularly for programmes that ensure their access to services, education and livelihood, and especially for programmes that provide socioeconomic reintegration support for internally displaced persons and returnees who are women. The government should ensure that the armed security forces are vetted, trained and equipped to effectively protect civilians.

- There was a 56 per cent increase in reports of sexual violence in 2017 compared with the previous year, and women were also victims of other human rights violations, such as extrajudicial killings. During the political process, women are often targeted in efforts to intimidate candidates, voters and their communities, and to punish their male relatives, especially in the context of local elections, which are held at the same time as provincial and national elections. Even though women's share of the registered electorate is smaller than in previous elections (47 per cent compared with 52 per cent previously), especially in conflict-affected areas, owing to insecurity, that share still represents 21 million women who, despite poverty and violence, including extreme violence during the registration procedures in several places, queued up to participate in the process. They did their part, and now the government and its international partners must do their part in protecting and supporting their participation. Women's groups and lawmakers have tried to add parity requirements or quotas to the electoral law, but their efforts have been rejected. The Security Council and the international community, including the European Union, can still put pressure on the main political parties and incentivize women's representation in the upcoming elections. The role of women's civil society organizations is very important, and the Special Representative will continue to advocate for the adoption of a law to protect human rights defenders.

- MONUSCO will continue to implement a multidimensional approach to integrate a gender perspective into the delivery of its mandate. MONUSCO has introduced an innovative approach through the use of a gender marker to assess and improve the gender-responsiveness of the Mission's different sections and components. The Gender Affairs Unit trains approximately 450 staff every month, mostly men. The Mission aims to ensure that at least 30 per cent of active participants in community alert networks and local protection committees are women, in order to ensure that protection efforts integrate women's security needs and priorities more effectively.

- Within MONUSCO structures, however, and in spite of a recent directive to implement the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity, only 3.5 per cent of military troops, 8 per cent of military experts, 5.4 per cent of staff officers, 10 per cent of personnel in formed police units, 18.8 per cent of individual police officers, 28 per cent of international civilian staff and 15 per cent of national staff are women. MONUSCO now has several women in positions of leadership, including the Special Representative, the Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and the Chief of Staff, and they will spare no efforts in pushing for gender equality in all these areas. The Special Representative stated that she would not allow a "women-led" peacekeeping mission to fail with regard to advancing gender equality. MONUSCO will ensure it meets the directive's immediate objective of raising the percentage of women among the international staff from 28 to 34 per cent before the end of the year, and the Special Representative asked

Security Council members to continue to remind troop- and police-contributing countries of the importance of deploying more women to the Mission.

- The African Women Leaders Network, which includes three prominent Congolese members representing the incumbent party, the opposition and civil society, provides a good venue for collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union. Other important partners include regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community; the Economic Community of Central African States; the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is a major player in the country; and government partners, including the Presidential Adviser on Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment, the Minister for Gender and the Minister for Human Rights, all of whom are women.

- The Special Representative also expressed her commitment to bring up these issues during her briefing to the Security Council on 7 March 2018, and to encourage the Council to demand enhanced periodic reporting from MONUSCO on these matters, including on the implementation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support policy on gender-responsive peacekeeping operations and the system-wide strategy on gender parity, and on measures to incentivize the deployment of women by troop- and police-contributing countries, the specific analysis of gender and conflict dynamics and the use of the Mission's good offices to advance women, peace and security.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, highlighted some of the recommendations shared in writing with the Group, in addition to those highlighted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. These include the addition of stronger language and specificity to the mandate with regard to: protection for and support of women's human rights defenders and women activists and non-governmental organizations; support for women-led prevention and conflict-resolution initiatives, including the monitoring of electoral violence and intimidation; the need for the government and the United Nations to put in place specific plans and measures to ensure women's political participation in the upcoming elections, especially in conflict-affected provinces; the need to explicitly acknowledge the important role of gender advisers and gender expertise; and the need to update, fund and implement the national action plan on women, peace and security.

The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict noted that, after a decade of reporting on sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2017 marked the first time that their annual report extended beyond the Kivus to include Ituri, Tanganyka and the Kasais, and that Twa militias were responsible for some of the worst allegations of sexual violence. In 2017, 804 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were verified by the United Nations, which represents a sharp increase and a return to pre-2014 levels of violence. The number of reported incidents collected by the United Nations Population Fund and partners has also doubled since 2016. In spite of the important gains and breakthroughs of the last few years--the appointment of the Presidential Adviser, the signing of the joint communiqué, the adoption of action plans by the military and the police, the pledges by individual commanders and the extensive training sessions and trials, including the arrest of Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka and the milestone convictions in the Kavumu trial in 2017 — the worsening security situation and a lack of resources puts all this progress in jeopardy. For example, it is the first time that the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence do not have any dedicated funds to work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Women still do not have access to

reparations--and the law on reparations has been stalled — and even judicially mandated rewards remain unexecuted. The Security Council and the donor community must remain engaged and vigilant on this issue and maintain forceful language in the mandate with regard to the importance of women protection advisers and the full implementation of the 2013 joint communiqué, and emphasize that protecting women human rights defenders and civil society is always the best way to mitigate conflict-related sexual violence.

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting and thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her extensive briefing, and stated that they looked forward to her participation in the meeting of the Security Council on 7 March and in a follow-up meeting of the Informal Expert Group before the end of the year.